

# ‘Federation or Death’: The Beginnings and Early Ideology of Cypriot Anarchism

*Antonis Pastellopoulos*

## ABSTRACT

The article presents a first overview of the emergence and early development of anarchism in the Republic of Cyprus, utilising archival material. It contextualises Cypriot anarchism within the broader wave of political ideas making their appearance after the island’s de-facto partition in 1974, tracing the formation of the first anarchist groups and the circulation of early Cypriot anarchist publications. It moves on to briefly discuss three key historical moments of anarchist political expression, followed by an examination of early Cypriot anarchist political ideology, noting the general commitment towards social and political autonomy, as well as the influence of radical feminism, anti-authoritarianism and postcolonial thought. It then moves on to examine the issue of grand narration in early anarchist representations of Cypriot history, concluding with Cypriot anarchist perspectives on the federal reunification of Cyprus.

**Keywords:** *Cyprus, anarchism, anti-nationalism, anti-colonialism, feminism*

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Academic interest in Cypriot anarchist politics has seen an increase in recent years, mainly due to the intersection of Cypriot anarchism<sup>1</sup> with grassroots political mobilisation (Siammas 2013, Iliopoulou & Karathanasis 2014, Ioannou 2019). Little focus has however been placed on its early development. This article aims to fill this gap by offering a first presentation of early Cypriot anarchist politics and ideology, focusing on the 1980s and early 1990s, the first decade of their development, utilising anarchist magazines, brochures, leaflets and other publications located in private archives. By employing qualitative in-depth thematic analysis and an interpretivist epistemological position, I argue that early Cypriot anarchism has been influenced by radical feminism, anti-authoritarianism and postcolonial thought,

while maintaining a general commitment towards social and political autonomy, upon which its own particular grand narration over the historical development of Cyprus is founded.

The article begins with a presentation of the collected documents, followed by a discussion of methodology and a subsequent brief historical contextualisation. It continues with a reconstruction of the beginnings of anarchism in Cyprus, documenting the first anarchist political groups and publications, further highlighting three historical moments in the development of anarchist politics, before moving on to discuss the particular ideology of early Cypriot anarchism.

## ACCESSING AND COLLECTING DOCUMENTS

A well-established approach to researching radical politics has been militant ethnography, a 'deliberately politicised approach to qualitative research that helps activist-researchers engage with the cultural logic and practices underpinning contemporary anti-authoritarian social movements' (Apoifis 2016, p3). As noted by anthropologist Jeffrey Juris, '[m]ilitant ethnography generates practical, embodied understanding' (2007, p166), aiming to 'facilitate ongoing activist (self-)reflection regarding movement goals, tactics, strategies and organizational forms' (p165). While the present article does not follow an explicitly ethnographic methodology, the thinking behind its writing, as well as the ways through which its analysed data have been collected, situate it within this militant tradition of research, with the collected documents located primarily through the extra-parliamentary radical political networks of Nicosia, within which I have been an active participant during the last ten years. Due to my long association with this political sphere, I have acquired a certain esoteric knowledge of the discursive terrain characterising it, as well as gaining a reputation as a collector of political texts from extra-parliamentary sources, a practice that initially began as a pastime interest, only to evolve into a serious effort at building my own archival collection. This positionality has given me the advantage of ease of access to the necessary physical archives, through my relationship to key groups and individuals.

The main collected data consisted of leaflets, brochures and magazines located through archival research that was carried out in the physical archives of political groups and politicised individuals, all of which were located in the city of Nicosia, on the side under the control of the Republic of Cyprus. All documents were written in either Modern Greek or the Greek Cypriot dialect, languages in which I am both a fluent reader and speaker. For the purposes of analysis, digital and physical copies were created of all collected documents, in order to minimise potential wear to the

original texts, while allowing for the writing of notes on the physical copies of the texts during the coding process.

The majority of these documents were located in the archive of *Kaymakkin*,<sup>2</sup> a social space which was originally opened in 2015 by *Syspirosi Atakton*, a contemporary Cypriot anarchist collective. The collection consisted of anarchist, anti-authoritarian and leftist material organised by country of origin (specific countries included France, Greece and the UK), while in the case of Cypriot material, the documents were organised by political group and/or publishing group. Overlooking the expected minor deterioration caused by time, the material was well preserved and could thus be easily read. This archive can be traced back at least to 2008, a year that saw the initiative of setting up an open-access political library in the walled city of Nicosia, then an area of numerous political initiatives (Ioannou 2019, p223), come into fruition. The library was named *Agrammata* (literally meaning illiteracy) and was set up through the buying and donating of used books by visitors and members of the managing collective (Nekatomata 2018). During its existence, *Agrammata* served also as a meeting space for a number of anarchist and leftist organisations, the last of which was *Syspirosi Atakton*, which transferred the books and archival material from *Agrammata* to *Kaymakkin*, with the closure of the library and the parallel opening of the social space in 2015.

The documents collected from the *Kaymakkin* archive consisted of the magazine *Traino stin Poli* (*Train in the City*), numbering eleven issues, one of which was a double edition. There is little doubt of the significance of this magazine as a source of information, since it acted as the printed medium within which all sorts of materials were collected, from long articles articulating a particular theoretical viewpoint, to short comments, reprints of distributed leaflets and posters, satirical pieces on current events and more importantly, commentaries on the developments pertaining the anarchist scene itself. Many leaflets and posters, for example, have only been located in the form of reprints found in this magazine, while information in relation to anarchist political activity is drawn primarily from these texts. Its publication history is briefly discussed as part of reconstructing the early beginnings of Cypriot anarchism.

Collaboration with individuals active in social movements and radical politics has become a well-established practice in militant academic research (Katsiaficas 2006, Juris 2007, Apoifis 2016). Beyond the aforementioned collection, supplementary archival work was also carried out in the private archives of individuals active in the extra-parliamentary politics of Nicosia. As anthropologist David Graeber pointed out, research carried out through the collaboration with activists always entails the possibility of endangering individuals by exposing sensitive information

on the examined movements, as well as of individuals active within them (2009, p12). The identity of individuals who have provided access to their archival collections is thus consciously kept anonymous, while any other information gained outside of the archival record has not been included.

These private archives were more extensive and included material ranging from the Cypriot ecological movement and the far-left, to far-right propaganda and cultural magazines. While the material drawn from these archives is limited in terms of quantity, numbering merely two brochures, two magazine issues and two leaflets, their content is significant, as some of these texts form the first public expressions of anarchist ideas that we have on record. A number of utilised documents originating from recent decades were also already in my possession prior to the initiation of this research, as part of my personal collection. These include the fifteenth issue of the magazine *Entropia* (*Entropy*) published by *Syspirosi Atakton*, as well as the second issue of the newspaper *Anafentos* (*Without a Master*) published by the *Union of Anarchists*, both of which include some brief, but notable pieces of information on the early presence of anarchism on the island. Finally, another brochure from 1985 originates from my own collection, given to me as a gift by an acquaintance who located it in his storage room.

The future researcher will be glad to know that this material is now easily accessible, as the formation of the *Cyprus Movements Archive* ([movementsarchive.org](http://movementsarchive.org)), an independent, online open-access archival initiative focusing on the leftist and radical political history of Cyprus, has led to the concentration, digitalisation and classification of an extensive collection of material, at present remaining however mostly accessible to Greek speakers, despite the occasional English translation. While there are certainly a series of texts from the 1980s that have yet to be found (notably leaflets and posters), the aforementioned material offers a sufficient basis for an initial attempt at reconstructing, however partially, those early years of radical politicisation. All documents that came to be utilised for the purposes of writing this article are available digitally on the Movements Archive.

## EMPLOYED METHODOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study of social activity remains burdened with contradictory perspectives on the role and relationship of the researcher towards the phenomena analysed. One common epistemological perspective, occasionally described as sociological positivism (Balon & Holmwood 2019, p335), argues that human activity can, and indeed should, be approached similarly to the way natural phenomena are approached by the hard sciences, as a set of phenomena to be analysed through the formulation of

hypotheses and the careful employment of clearly defined methodologies for their testing and evaluation, a process of inquiry that can, in theory, produce an objective representation of its object of analysis (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020, p41). A common critique to this perspective is raised by interpretivism, an epistemological position which questions both the capacity of the researcher to approach human activity in the same way that a natural scientist approaches physical objects, as well as the very nature of the phenomena examined by the social sciences. From an interpretivist perspective, social phenomena are not merely existing facts and objects located outside of the researcher and in 'the field', but are already constituted within existing social relations and their own peculiar historicity, mediation of meaning and set of power dynamics, social relations within which the social scientist is also situated (Marvasti 2004, p5). The researcher is thus located within a set of mediated meanings that also make themselves present in the developing of her research – ethical, political, cultural and other subjective considerations are present in the social scientist's process of observation, data examination and analysis in a way and extent that is seldom expected to be found in the work of a geologist or a physicist (Bhattacharjee 2012, p104). Being aware of the circumstances pertaining to social research, the researcher can thus consciously produce only interpretations of social phenomena that cannot claim to offer an absolute, objective representation of social reality (Bhattacharya 2008, p464). The present article is in agreement with the general claims of interpretivist epistemology and therefore follows an interpretivist approach in its analysis.

Situated within the tradition of militant research (Katsiaficas 2006, Juris 2007, Graber 2009), the article has been written from the perspective of an insider. As Jeffrey Juris has argued, academic writing and publishing can be used 'as a form of resistance [generating] alternative, politically engaged accounts' (2007, p173), in an attempt to locate and present alternatives to our existing social reality and its corresponding power relations. This article is thus a conscious attempt to make Cypriot anarchism more visible and known, by codifying its historical existence as a political tradition on the island, in a formal, standardised manner. Additionally, this article also acts as a form of indirect intervention in the discussions present in the Cypriot extra-parliamentary scene on both sides of the divide, by inviting the reader to reconsider Cypriot anarchism as an alternative to other extra-parliamentary political ideologies.

The collected texts were approached in two different ways. Initially, they were carefully scrutinised in order to isolate and extract specific factual information, in an attempt to reconstruct, in a linear way, a chronology of key events relating to the origins and early development of anarchism in Cyprus. Such information consisted

of the publication of texts, the opening of social spaces and the carrying out of political mobilisations. This information was then cross-referenced, where possible, with information present in anarchist and extra-parliamentary publications of more recent decades. Another important source employed for cross-referencing has been the recording of a public presentation and discussion between leftist Costis Ahniotis and anarchist Andreas Panayiotou on the history of radical Cypriot politics, an event that was held by *Syspirosi Atakton* in 2017. The subsequent historical reconstruction has been extensively referenced, in order to enable the easy scrutinisation of its claims through the archival record by future researchers. As the formulated chronology has been established by focusing exclusively on anarchist publications, there is undoubtedly an intrinsic bias in the subsequently presented historical reconstruction, which may inflate the significance of specific events or ignore developments not recorded in the employed documents. This limitation should be here highlighted, if only to indicate that a further reconstruction of the history of anarchism in Cyprus needs to include sources of information beyond these texts, including interviews of activists and participants in the political mobilisations of the period, as well as a broader archival research that would be able to evaluate the significance of political developments in the particular historical context, perhaps through the careful utilisation of newspaper archives.

In addition, the accumulated documentary data were approached through qualitative in-depth thematic analysis, in order to establish the ideological currents present in early Cypriot anarchist ideology. Thematic analysis is well established as a method in qualitative social research and is commonly utilised in the analysis of documents (Prior 2008, p833), entailing a close familiarisation with the collected data that enables a detailed understanding of the meaning and ideas expressed within the documents analysed (Bowen 2009, p32). Nonetheless, it is important to note here that an analysis which restricts itself exclusively on the examination of documents, also limits itself to the documentary reality of the phenomenon it examines (Wolff 2004, p284). Being primarily a descriptive method (Ayres 2008, p868), thematic analysis can offer insights into the ideological content of early Cypriot anarchism, but cannot inform us of its effect on the political practices that Cypriot anarchism has historically employed.

A standard coding process was employed for the establishment of themes, followed by thematic analysis (p867). The documents were closely scrutinised to establish in-depth familiarity with their content, followed by the initial coding of a first set of identified themes. Established themes were again scrutinised through a repeated examination of their corresponding data, in order to locate potential contradictions that would necessitate the re-organisation and merging of themes,

in order to accurately reflect the accompanying data. The final themes established from this coding process included feminism, sexuality, capitalism, nationalism and Cypriot identity and history. Finally, the themes were further compared with each other in order to examine whether they expressed antithetical ideological positions, or whether they shared a more general ideological commonality linking them together. Given the limitations of the article's length, not all established themes are presented, or assigned the same level of representation.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

After five years of guerrilla warfare by Greek Cypriot nationalists aiming for the annexation of Cyprus by the mainland Greek state, the island gained its independence from the British Empire with the formation of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 (Ekici 2019, p22). The new state's constitution was modelled on the principle of bi-communality, entailing the sharing of political power between the two largest communities, the Greek Cypriots, forming the majority of the population, and the Turkish Cypriots, who constituted the largest minority (Salem 1992, p119). The Cypriot population was thus separated into two constitutional communities, the Greek and the Turkish, which shared an equitable level of participation in the division of state power and the decision-making process, irrespective of the population size of each community.

The Republic faced challenges from the very beginning, as the leadership of each community pursued antithetical and antagonistic aims. The Greek Cypriot community continued to pursue the aim of annexation, undermining the independence of the new state, with the Turkish Cypriot community pursuing in parallel a politics of territorial partition, with the aim of dividing the island upon ethnic lines. The bi-communal constitutional order collapsed in 1963, after the Greek Cypriot president Archbishop Makarios promoted constitutional amendments seeking to replace the bi-communal character of the state by a proportional representative political structure, as a first step towards the annexation of the island by Greece (Kızılyürek 2019, p491). The political crisis that unfolded soon turned into generalised inter-communal violence between opposing paramilitary forces. In 1964, United Nations Forces were deployed on the island to pacify the conflict, in correlation with inter-communal negotiations aiming for a consensual agreement on its resolution. While generalised violence was mostly contained after 1964, the 1963 crisis led to the de-facto suspension of bi-communalism, the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot population into enclaves surrounded by Greek Cypriot military forces and the loss of Turkish Cypriot political representation in the institutions of the state (Ekici 2019, p23).

The conflict, commonly known as the Cyprus Problem, reached another violent peak in the summer of 1974, when a coup staged by the Greek military dictatorship then governing Greece overthrew the Greek Cypriot president, triggering the invasion of the island by Turkish forces (Hughes-Wilson 2011, p86). These developments resulted in the occupation of 36.2 per cent of north Cyprus by Turkey and the de-facto ethnic and geographical partition of the island through forced population displacement, with a United Nations buffer zone separating the opposing armies (Kızılyürek 2019, p833). In 1977, inter-communal negotiations mediated by the United Nations resulted in the 1977 High Level Agreement, which specified that the resolution of the conflict will be founded upon the reunification of the island under a bi-communal federal structure in a new constitutional arrangement, where each community will control a constituent state, united under a central bi-communal government on the federal level (Ker-Lindsay 2009, p16). In 1983, north Cyprus declared itself an independent Turkish Cypriot state under the name 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus', but gained recognition only by the Republic of Turkey, remaining in economic and diplomatic isolation (Ekici 2019, p50). The rest of the island remains until today under the control of the internationally recognised 'Republic of Cyprus', itself de-facto controlled only by the Greek Cypriot constitutional community, but remaining recognised as the only sovereign state on the island. Cyprus has remained divided and inter-communal negotiations for a federal reunification of the island have unsuccessfully continued since 1977, while freedom of movement between the two sides was only made possible again in 2003.

The events of 1974 had a tremendous impact on the Republic of Cyprus, from the triggering of a recession through the loss of vital economic infrastructure (Pashardes & Hajispyrou 2003, p18) and the mass proletarianisation of Greek Cypriot refugees (Zetter 1992, p10), to a general political crisis, as the new military and political realities had shifted the balance of power towards the Turkish Cypriot side, with the terms mutually accepted in the 1977 High Level Agreement considered as a set of otherwise unacceptable concessions, agreed to merely because of military defeat (Kızılyürek 2019, p840). These effects were further expressed through a crisis in political ideology, as the two ideological narratives dominant in Greek Cypriot society since the middle of the twentieth century, Greek Cypriot nationalism and communism, depended on progressive views of history under which the events of 1974 could not be easily subsumed.

For Greek Cypriot nationalism, this entailed the perception of the island's eventual incorporation with the rest of the contemporary Hellenic world, an inevitable future event towards which Cyprus was directed as part of the necessary workings of history (Kitromilides 1990, p14). For communism, as it was expressed



by AKEL, the leftist party dominating left-wing politics since the 1940s, Cyprus remained locked in a struggle for national self-determination even after its independence, fighting against the forces of 'imperialism', a condition necessitating the maintenance of national unity against 'imperialist' intervention until the acquisition of genuine self-determination, a first step in the process of the socialist transformation of society (Dunphy & Bale 2007, p293). On the basis of such arguments, it had supported the state throughout the violent developments of the 1960s, promoting the Greek Cypriot government's attempts to resolve the conflict on terms favourable to the Greek Cypriot side (Kızılyürek 2019, p646). While the role played by Greece in the island's de-facto partition evaporated any expectation or support for Greek annexation (Mavratsas 1997, p720), a similar disillusionment was unfolding on the institutional left, with AKEL declaring the solution of the Cyprus Problem as a necessary prerequisite for the socialist transformation of Cypriot society, displacing the possibility of a post-capitalist society into an unknown, unforeseeable and indeterminable future (Charalambous 2012, p154).

The vacuum left with the decline of Greek Cypriot nationalism was filled by cypriotism in the 1970s and 1980s, a vaguely defined ideology which unequivocally supported the independence of Cyprus, and which became associated primarily with political centrism and the AKEL left. In general, cypriotism based its positions on the principle 'that Cyprus has its own sui generis character and, thus, must be viewed as an entity which is independent from both the motherlands of the two main communities of the island, that is, Greece and Turkey' (Mavratsas 1997, p721). On the superficial level of political discourse and public symbolism, these ideological shifts appeared significant, as the symbols and flag of the Cypriot state were incorporated within broader patriotic symbolism, while the independence of Cyprus began to be publicly celebrated as a monumental historical event (p720). Cypriotism however came to promote and strengthen the Greek Cypriot-dominated Republic, falling in line with the Republic's international campaign against Turkish Cypriot autonomy and international recognition, reaffirming its status as the only internationally recognised independent state on the island (Ioannides & Pastellopoulos 2020, p77). That a new political consensus was emerging was evident with the resurgence of Greek Cypriot nationalism in the 1990s. While the ethnic, cultural or social character of the state remained a field of fierce dispute between cypriotists and nationalists, the acceptance, legitimacy and existence of an independent (Greek) Cypriot state was no longer seriously doubted (Mavratsas 1997, 728). Debates and discussions over the Cyprus Problem became the primary field of political contestation, with the Problem itself reaching the level of a 'hegemonic ideology for national unity ... since the "national issue" had to be above all and linked to all issues'

(Panayiotou 2012, p79), silencing from public discourse attempts and claims for a politics not centred on the 'national issue', such as ecological concerns, anti-racist politics or LGBT and women's rights activism (Kamenou 2011, p121).

The post-1974 period was further characterised by the emergence and expansion of leftist and radical extra-parliamentary groups, marking a clear shift in political mobilisation from the extra-parliamentary stagnation of the 1960s. These groups presented a new wave of political ideas, ranging from feminism, ecology and Trotskyism, to LGBT activism and social liberalism (Ioannou 2013, p22). Forming an integral part of this new wave, anarchist political views began to appear in the city of Limassol in the 1980s (Panayiotou 2012, p79).

## THE BEGINNINGS OF ANARCHISM IN CYPRUS

In the summer of 1981, a group of young individuals rented two rooms in Limassol to hold meetings, in which anarchist political ideas were discussed (Ahniotis & Panayiotou 2017, 41:00). This meeting place, which came to be known as *Kkilimi* (Kilim, a type of carpet), seems to have been frequented by an increasing number of friends and acquaintances, forming the first circle of what came to be known as the anarchist anti-authoritarian scene (Panayiotou 1994, p42). With the end of the summer, the majority of the *Kkilimi* circle went abroad for university studies, leading a section of them to the city of Lyon, France, where they set up another social space (Anon 2019, p22). Little is known of this Lyon circle beyond the fact that it produced, printed and distributed the first Cypriot anarchist publication in 1982, called *Mavres Pinelies* (*Black Brush Strokes*), a magazine that ran for a mere single issue. The identification with a specific ideological tradition was clearly rejected in the magazine's editorial, which stated that:

To the eternal lovers of labels, who will surely name us something between autonomists, libertarians, anti-authoritarians and anarchists (most probably) we answer by sticking out our tongue [...] We reject labels because they serve only authority, which has carved out of them a whole ideology in order to turn us into numbers and symbols registered in folders (Anon 1982, p4).

Despite this refusal of self-description, *Mavres Pinelies* was an evidently left-leaning anarchist magazine with strong anti-authoritarian positions. In discussing the organisational question, the editorial team directly attacked political parties as a form of political organisation, arguing instead for the self-organisation of political activity through anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical structures:

Having as our goal the *abolition* of authority and of the state [emphasis in the original], we could not but adopt organizational models based upon what we are demanding, that is, anti-authoritarian and anti-hierarchical models, [c]ontrary to the organizations and political parties formed by right-ists, left-wingers and leftists on the standards of the state (registration of members, elections, managerial central committees), whose aim is precisely the acquisition of power. We want resistance to develop everywhere that is possible, [we want] the destruction of all authoritarian structures that correspond to our authoritarian society and their transformation through the collapsing of all bonds of submission binding them with the mechanisms of the state (Anon, p3).

*Mavres Pinelies* further contained a strong feminist element, with one article addressing rape and another discussing the everyday experience of women in relation to sexual objectification and sexism. While these articles were not particularly theoretical, the influence of radical feminist thought is evident, both in the way that the personal, everyday experience of women is given attention, representation and emphasis, as well as in expressing an understanding of the relation between men and women as an unequal relation of power, reproducible through universal structures of physical, sexual and psychological violence, an ideological position characteristic of the more radical expressions of second-wave feminism (Rowland & Klein 1996, p11). This emphasis on the universal structure of gendered oppression is more directly expressed in the concluding remarks of the article on rape, which argued that:

We live in a society hierarchically structured, founded upon competition and interests. A society that imposes upon us; the pre-arranged roles of dominator and dominated. Of course, the relations between men and women (dominator-dominated) do not escape this general social frame, defined since the roles have been established (Christodoulou & Christodoulou 1982, p10).

While there were no publications in the subsequent years, the group continued to engage with radical ideas, attempting to critically analyse Cypriot society from an anti-authoritarian perspective. This is at least the conclusion one could arrive at from reading the 1984 pamphlet *Cyprus, The National Issue and Nationalism: A Libertarian Approach*, written by a Cypriot anarchist and published anonymously in Athens, which informs us that the author's arguments were developed in relation to discussions held by the Lyon circle over how to approach the Cyprus Problem

from an anarchist, anti-authoritarian perspective (Anon 2018, p17). The content of this pamphlet, which argues its position in opposition to Maoist and Trotskyist interpretations of the Cyprus Problem produced by Greek and Cypriot political groups, sets it apart from the far-left ideological zeitgeist of the period, producing a distinguishable political viewpoint that came to be subsequently associated with Cypriot anarchism throughout the 1980s. The difference is not merely derived from the employment of anarchist, rather than Marxist conceptual tools and phraseology, but from its insistence to view the Cyprus Problem through the lenses of national identity formation, forced cultural homogenisation, patriarchal relations of power and nation-state building. This approach aimed to demystify the conflict from the various right and left-wing nationalist analyses dominant in both Greece and Cyprus at the time. Instead of offering a proposed ultimate solution to the conflict, the pamphlet deconstructed national categories as historically imposed imagined communities, urging for the critical re-evaluation of Cypriot history and for the radical theorisation of the conflict outside nationalist theoretical perspectives.

A second, shorter pamphlet titled *Cyprus: The National Issue and the Anarchists*, was further produced in 1985, which reiterated the main points on nationalism and Cypriot history. In that same year *Chrysallida* (*Chrysalis*), the first Cypriot self-managed alternative social space, opened its doors in Limassol. Its presence, which would last for five years, allowed for a common crossing point for youth subcultures, alternative lifestyles, grassroots political initiatives and informal anarchist groupings (Anon 1990, p15). As the focal meeting point between sections of a growing politicised alternative scene, *Chrysallida* was central to the organisation of political initiatives and the circulation of informal publications. Most anarchist political initiatives taking place in Limassol at that period were thus, either directly or indirectly, connected to *Chrysallida* (ibid.). Additionally, two political groups were particularly active, *Anafentos* (*Without a master*), which could be credited as the first anarchist political group in Cyprus (Anarchist Union 2011, p1); and the *Initiative Against Social Racism*, which became involved in anti-militarist political initiatives, especially in relation to the right of conscientious objection against forced military conscription (Initiative Against Social Racism 1988b, p15). By 1987, the initial issue of *Traino stin Poli* (*Train in the City*), the first periodically published Cypriot anarchist magazine, began circulating (Anon 1994b, p2). *Traino* was a primarily underground magazine, probably distributed through photocopying, with the exception of the last three issues, which were formally published.<sup>3</sup> It hosted articles from various individuals and political groups, and ran for eleven issues, terminating its circulation in 1994. The magazine often maintained a humorous and at times sarcastic tone, while its interests varied greatly, ranging from anti-militarism, sexual

liberation, radical ecology and anti-nationalism, to subcultural music, historical re-interpretation, atheism, as well as local and international developments.

At present we are far from being able to produce a comprehensive narrative of Cypriot anarchism's development, either from the perspective of its subcultural mobilisations, or its ideological contestations and direct political activity. Three particular moments of contestation can however be pointed to as significant in the expression of anarchist political consciousness, outside the limits of its subcultural circles and inter-personal networks. The first was the march for 'the right to be different' that was held in Limassol in 1987, as a response to the banning of motorcycle riding in the main streets of the city. During the 1980s, motorcycle riders formed one of the most recognisable Cypriot youth subcultures. From the point of view of the anarchist scene, the ban was the climax to a series of moral panics surrounding the declared 'delinquency' of Cypriot youth (Anon 1985, p1, Anon 1987c, p12). These moral panics had begun two years earlier, in 1985, with the scapegoating of Cypriot youth by the mass media for racist violence incited against Arab migrants in the tourist suburb of Yermasoyia (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis 2012, p280). Despite the purely symbolic character of the march, it marked the beginning of a focus on 'internal marginalized groups (motorcycle subculture, deviant youth, gays, Turkish-Cypriots in the south)' (Panayiotou 2012, p79) by the anarchist circles of Limassol, as well as one of the most notable early examples of political youth mobilisation outside the strict limits of the 'national issue' and of formal party politics.

The second moment worth noting was the development of the first anti-militarist political initiative against the Republic's policy of forced military conscription, with the formation of the *Committee in Support of Conscientious Objector Yiannis Parpas* in 1988. The committee was formed after a public assembly was called by Limassolian anarchists and the Trotskyist group *Workers' Democracy*, following the imprisonment of Yiannis Parpas, a reservist who refused to continue his participation in military exercises, on the basis of his political conscience (Initiative Against Social Racism 1988a, p13). In his letter from prison, Parpas stated that:

I am being punished for my beliefs, punished because I consider it hypocrisy on the one hand to promote the rapprochement with Turkish Cypriots, some of them even call them 'brothers', and on the other to empower our military and to increasingly militarize our society and life. I am punished because I do not want to strengthen a military for which there is no guarantee that when it becomes powerful enough, it will not be utilized again to execute 'heroic feats' like the ones that it executed before 1974 against

Turkish Cypriots and during 1974 against both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriot workers (Committee in Support of Conscientious Objector Yiannis Parpas 1988).

The Committee organised a concert in support of Parpas and distributed a series of anti-militarist leaflets and a pamphlet informing of his case and of international resolutions for the rights of conscientious objectors (Initiative Against Social Racism 1988a, p14). During the same period, picketing protests were organised in Nicosia against the introduction of the so-called 'Urgent Contribution for Defence', a tax specifically levied for the strengthening and development of the Greek Cypriot military (Workers' Democracy 1989, p60). The momentum of the Committee appears to have withered the following year, with the committee no longer being active by the end of 1989. The mobilisations undoubtedly failed to secure long-term changes in relation to both militarisation and conscription. They constitute however the first examples of organised anti-militarist activity within the deeply militarised society of the Republic, laying the foundation of an anti-militarist consciousness that has remained integral to extra-parliamentary Greek Cypriot politics well into the twenty-first century (Iliopoulou & Karathanasis 2014, p180, Achiotis 2016, p30).

The last case was a direct intervention within Greek Cypriot political discourse and a public challenge to the hegemony of Greek Cypriot nationalism. In April of 1992, Andreas Panayiotou, an anarchist, sociologist and member of *Traino's* core publishing group, was invited to appear on the popular television programme *Horis Plaisia (Without Restraints)*, hosted by journalist Takis Hajigeorgiou and broadcasted by the publicly owned Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (Horis Plaisia 1992). The program emphasised free discussion between host and guest and had received repeated attention due to the tendency of hosting socially marginalised individuals, including among others, a Turkish Cypriot, a drug addict and a sex worker (Panayiotou 1993a, p14). Hajigeorgiou introduced the program with the sentence that 'during a time of nationalist resurgence, we have here with us someone who declares himself not Greek, but Cypriot' (Horis Plaisia 1992). What followed was a tense discussion between Panayiotou and Hajigeorgiou, during which Panayiotou described the historical narratives taught in schools as a construction; argued that national identity is a contemporary phenomenon historically constituted in modern Europe; that Greek culture was imported to the island during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; that the view that Cypriots are Greek was imposed through the Orthodox Church and the educational system; and that Cypriot identity is a cultural identity transcending the limits of national identification. Despite the obvious disagreement of Hajigeorgiou with the views of his guest, there was a fierce

political and media backlash on the programme, pressuring for its censorship and resulting in its eventual cancellation (Hajigeorgiou 1993, p14).

The views aired by Panayiotou came into direct confrontation with hegemonic understandings of Cypriot history and national identity, by extension challenging the internal political consensus over the Cyprus Problem, as well as the political loyalties expected to be universally held by Greek Cypriot citizens. To appreciate the originality and peculiarity of these positions, we have to explore the ideological content of Cypriot anarchism, that is, the peculiar conceptual lenses through which early Cypriot anarchism perceived existing and historical social relations, as well as the particular grand narrative that emanates from these lenses.

## IDEOLOGY AND GRAND NARRATION IN EARLY CYPRIOT ANARCHISM

Throughout the various magazines, leaflets and pamphlets that constitute the analytical texts of Cypriot anarchist political discourse, social and political developments are conceptually presented through a dialectic of oppressor and oppressed. While this representation is already present in *Mavres Pinelies*, it is further reinforced in the subsequent anarchist writings of the 1980s by a general commitment towards social and political autonomy, with acts of resistance to a particular oppressive apparatus often interpreted as part of a broader process towards general social and political autonomisation. The ideological commitment to social autonomy, specific to anarchism within the extra-parliamentary politics of the Republic, further enabled the critiquing of Greek Cypriot nationalist and Marxist positions for their support of perceived authoritarian political practices and structures, and for their reduction of all meaningful politics to a handful of specific power relations, such as the class struggle or national self-determination (Anon 1988, p7).

An example of this mode of conceptualisation is already evident in an early issue of *Traino* dealing with the throwing of eggs at teachers by secondary school students in 1987, in which the events are described as ‘the egg insurrection’, which ‘will remain in history as a sign in the process of the youth’s autonomy from the society of adults’ (Anon 1987b, p9). In another, shorter piece titled *On Autonomy*, this understanding of oppression is elevated to a general principle characterising Greek Cypriot society:

Cypriot society has not comprehended itself as a collective autonomous from the state, as a society welcoming to heterogeneity and difference [...] The assertion of the autonomy of society from the state, of the individual from the collective, of the subculture from the ‘tyranny of the majority’ [...]

passes through the articulation of a minority logos and praxis from the new postmodern minorities ... from the eggs of the students, the autonomous women's march against the occupation, the resistance to the trade unionist bureaucracy, the march for the right to be different (Anon 1987a, p7).

Another point in case is the stance taken by *Traino* on yet another moral panic and national outcry of the 1980s, surrounding a Greek Cypriot teenage girl who reportedly fell in love and decided to stay with a Turkish young adult while visiting her grandmother in the Turkish-occupied part of the island (Anon 1989, p6).<sup>4</sup> In direct opposition to the general political atmosphere, *Traino* openly supported the teenager in an article titled 'The Misery of Loving a Turk', arguing that the case generated so much attention precisely because '[t]he holy patriarchal family was disputed', with the teenager resisting 'the family, the fundamental unit of social reproduction with its petit bourgeois morals and social values [...] that frame bourgeois ideology and which are internalized in all classes through everyday alienation'. It further stated that 'it is not necessary for us to fall in love with a Turk in order to make some steps towards the path of independence-autonomy' (p7).

This understanding was further expressed in various texts concerning nationalism and its relationship to the peculiar context of Cyprus. While nationalism was presented as the ideology of the state, a standard position in anarchist and far-leftist readings of nationalism, Cypriot anarchism came to also view nationalism through a postcolonial lens of oppressor and oppressed, particularly in relation to the theoretical contributions of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Anon 1993b, p45). Thus Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms were further understood as expressions of cultural and national colonisation, as ideologies which undermine and silence local culture and experience:

Formal History insists that we are simply a part of a nation (Greek, Turkish, European) a leftover on a rift, a detail of History. We, as state History says, had no modern passions. The centre is always somewhere else. We are simply a periphery, the natives – a Christian oasis in a Muslim ocean, a mere 40 miles from Turkey, or a Muslim minority in a Greek island. No matter where you belong, you are a foreigner [...] Because the History of imported nationalisms in Cyprus is always above all the miserable History of the reconstitution of authority and the construction of submission towards national Imperialism. How much hate towards this place (and towards yourself) do you have to have in order to express such submissiveness? (Panayiotou 1993b, p18).



This peculiar postcolonial reading of the history of nationalism in Cyprus gave rise to re-interpretations of historical moments and events through a new narration of the island's history, formulating an understanding of Cyprus as an evolving autonomous political entity, with a corresponding 'Cypriot consciousness' situated in a continuous process of becoming. This grand narration placed at the centre of its articulation a denationalised historical subject struggling for the realisation of political, cultural and social autonomy, a subject that is occasionally represented in anarchist writings through the word 'Native', but more often simply through the word 'Cypriot' free from any attached ethnic prefix (Pastellopoulos 2017: 30).

An early example of such a grand narration was present in issue ten of *Traino*, in which serf revolts against Lusignan rulers, peasant insurrections against Ottoman bureaucrats, the acquisition of autocephalous independence by the Cypriot Orthodox Church, and the early workers' movement are collaged together under the historical struggle for the development of an autonomous Cyprus:

Symbols of the desire of Cypriots to regain their lost autonomy should be sought in those violent forms of resistance, with most typical cases being the revolt of Re Alexis against the Westerners in 1427 and Gavür Imam/Ioannikiou against the Ottoman Empire in 1833. This anti-authoritarian vein should also be recognized in the birth of the Communist Party of Cyprus in the 1920s when it preached free love, organized anti-annexation rallies and attempted to form agricultural collectives. The current degradation of these efforts by AKEL should be considered as analogous to the current degradation of the autocephalous Church of Cyprus in relation to the fact of the electability of its senior clergy. While the claiming and acquisition of these rights formed part of the historical formation of Cypriot Autonomy from the metropolitan centres, today they have become an obstacle to its further development (Anon 1991, p6).

Such narratives make their appearance in different forms, with varying degrees of detail and sometimes different points of emphasis. For example, a rather long text in the last issue of *Traino* describes the 1968 declaration by president Makarios of the shift in state policy from immediate Greek annexation to the maintenance of an independent Cyprus, as the opening of 'the curtain of the real Cypriot Revolution of the 20th century' (Panayiotou 1994, p40), while the coup d'état of 1974 is described as a 'counter-revolution which caused an autochthonous revolution', a revolution argued to be present in the sporadic resistance against the coupists which followed the coup (p41). Yet again, another such narration appears in the previous issue,

stating that 'Memory in this place was and always is a dangerous matter [...] an experience without a name, a scandal repelled to the depths of desires (and wounds) of the unconscious [...] the memory of another Cyprus – of a Cyprus that will forever be independent, autonomous' (Anon 1993, p3), followed by another selection of historical moments and events. The differences are to be found in the details and depth of the particular historical reconstruction. What is present in every narration is the trans-historical struggle of the Cypriot subject (rather than that of a class or a declared nation) towards the realisation of an autonomous political, cultural and social condition. It is in this sense that Cypriot identity is to be understood as a cultural identity transcending national identification, as the local expression of the progression towards the social, political and cultural autonomy of the island, an emerging identity that despite its suppression by nationalism, persists throughout the historical unfolding of the Cypriot experience (Panayiotou 1992, p2).

By the early 1990s, Cypriot anarchist publications included some of the most enthusiastic texts in support of a bi-communal federal reunification of the island. This support originated from the committed anti-nationalism of the anarchist scene, which viewed reunification as a grave defeat of the nationalist camp, as well as from the ideological commitment towards the entrenchment and expansion of political, cultural and social autonomy. The position was most clearly articulated in the 1993 article 'Federation or Death' written by Marios Trotsky (the name an obvious pseudonym), its title itself a parody of the Greek nationalist slogan 'Freedom or Death'. The article attacked the widely held position that the pre-1974 arrangement would be the ideal solution to the island's partition; and that federation is merely acceptable as the realistic, rather than the ideal road towards the island's reunification. Instead, it declared that 'the pre-1974 arrangement is not only unattainable but also undesirable and catastrophic, because it would again lead, in a short period of time, to clashes, destruction and death'. Precisely because of this past experience of ethnic conflict and nationalist violence, federation should be seen not as 'a solution out of necessity but as an ideal solution' (Trotsky 1993, p7). In the presence of a nationalist hegemony that continually reproduces itself through the conflict and utilises it to suspend and diminish social struggles on both sides of the island, the article further argued that the possibility of a 'a real federation, in a free society of free individuals [with] the decentralization of power and the self-rule of the different communities (not merely the ethnic ones) [...] has been destroyed' (ibid.). Bi-communal federation is thus perceived to disturb precisely this nationalist hegemony, by providing both a common space as well as sufficient autonomy to each ethnic community, paving 'the only way for the reunification of society and the formation of possibilities for a real interaction between the two communities, and the challenging of the powers which

oppress them through their claims of protection from the national enemies' (ibid.). The article moved on to further support bi-communal federation on anti-militarist grounds, concluding with the statement that:

Federation [...] is the need to feel all people as fellow humans without dividing them into Greeks and Turks, compatriots and barbarians and Europeans and Orientals. Federation is a necessity because there is no other prospect for the inhabitants of this island, if they want to create a future as peaceful and happy as possible, in these hard times we live in. Even if federation did not exist anywhere in the world, we would have had to invent it (ibid.).

This article has had a lasting impact on subsequent far-left and anti-authoritarian positions over the Cyprus Problem in the Republic of Cyprus, probably remaining the most widely read anarchist text from the period. It is referenced in the 2010 analysis of the Cyprus Problem produced by the Nicosian leftist group *Falies* (2010, p2) and has also been republished in 2017, in the tenth issue of the Cypriot anti-authoritarian magazine *Entropia*. The article's position has been further reinstated relatively recently as the formal position held by *Syspirosi Atakton* (2016, p2). We cannot of course claim here that all Cypriot anarchist positions are reducible to the aforementioned viewpoint or that anarchist groups have always historically supported a bi-communal federal solution, or for that matter, that they have consistently participated in the island's reunification movement. When a comprehensive federal solution was placed in parallel referendums on each side of Cyprus in 2004, the *Cypriot Anarchist Kernel*, a political group active in the early 2000s, was at best indifferent, arguing that 'any plan originating from dominant-statist perceptions does not aim at a liberated society' (2003, p1), with the question of its approval or disapproval therefore being a false dilemma from an anarchist point of view. Nonetheless, the peculiar persistence of anarchist politics in Cyprus, which has continued more or less uninterrupted since their appearance in the 1980s, as well as the general tendency of Cypriot anarchism to engage, participate and intervene in the grassroots politics surrounding the resolution of the Cyprus Problem, cannot be comprehensively appreciated without familiarisation with the ideological concerns characterising its first decade of development.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Cypriot anarchism made its appearance in the early 1980s, as part of a broader wave of new political ideas that attempted to challenge both the hegemony of the

'national issue', as well as the nationalist and communist ideological paradigms dominating political life in the Republic of Cyprus. Despite existing in the margins of Greek Cypriot political life, by 1992 Cypriot anarchist views had caused enough of a disturbance to lead to the cancellation of one of the most popular television programmes in the island. Anarchism further played a key role in the political mobilisation of a younger generation of Cypriots against the stigmatisation of social difference, while laying the foundation, in collaboration with the Trotskyist far-left, of the Greek Cypriot anti-militarist movement.

This article attempted to provide a first overview of these beginnings, based on the available archival record. Despite the limitations of this first attempt, we can note here that the positions articulated in this early period have remained an integral part of left-wing extra-parliamentary politics in the Republic of Cyprus, even if their origin is often forgotten. Evolving on the grassroots level and at the periphery of dominant political ideologies, they offer an ever-present critique, as well as a potential challenge to the contemporary political reality found in Cyprus.

**Antonis Pastellopoulos** grew up in the Republic of Cyprus, in the partitioned city of Nicosia. He studied sociology at the University of Glasgow (UK), analysing the ideology of early Cypriot anarchism in his dissertation. After graduation he moved on to study cultural and social anthropology at the University of Amsterdam (NA), with his thesis focusing on the politics of Cypriot identity in the left-wing extra-parliamentary political networks of Nicosia. He has been active in the extra-parliamentary political scene of Cyprus at different levels of intensity during the past ten years; and has been a regular contributor to the Cyprus Movements Archive, an open-access archival project aiming to make Cypriot radical texts and publications accessible to a general audience. He is currently a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of Warwick (UK).

## NOTES

- 1 The word 'Cypriot' is used here as a purely geographical term.
- 2 For accessibility, the original Greek names of political groups, publications and social spaces are presented with Latin characters, followed by their translation in brackets. If a name was deemed untranslatable, there is no subsequent translation. All translations of names, as well of the various quoted texts, are mine.
- 3 All newspapers and magazines published in the Republic of Cyprus are required by law to be reviewed by the Press and Information Office (PIO) and to send it a copy of their every issue for archiving. Unsurprisingly, this procedure has seldom been

followed for anarchist publications. The only exception found to this practice was the last three issues of *Traino*, which were instead formally published, in an attempt to broaden its audience and reduce its publishing costs, as it could then be openly sold in kiosks (Anon 1994a, p1).

- 4 Following the de-facto partition and ethnic segregation of the island in 1974, a number of Greek and Maronite Cypriots remained in the northern part of the island under Turkish Cypriot administration. While crossing the buffer zone was generally banned until the opening of checkpoints in 2003, visits by relatives was occasionally allowed on humanitarian grounds.

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